

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 00184 161939Z

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-20 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01

USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 FEA-02 DRC-01 /110 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3761

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KINGSTON 0184

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PINS, JM

SUBJ: RICE CRISIS

REF: KINGSTON 149

1. AS POINTED OUT IN REFTEL, SHORTAGES OF SEVERAL STAPLE FOOD-STUFFS IN RECENT WEEKS ARE GIVING RISE TO NEAR RIOT CONDITIONS IN LOCAL SUPERMARKETS AND FOODSHOPS. THE PRINCIPAL ITEM IN SHORT SUPPLY IS RICE, ONE OF THE MOST INEXPENSIVE STARCHES USED WIDELY IN THE JAMAICAN DIET. IN A REPORT TO THE NATION YESTERDAY, THE MINISTER OF TRADE, PJ PATTERSON, STATED THAT THE MAIN REASON FOR THE SHORTAGE WAS THE FAILURE OF THE 1973 GUYANESE RICE CROP WHICH HAS RESULTED IN JAMAICA'S RECEIVING LESS THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE 40,000 TONS IT HAD REQUESTED FROM GUYANA. PATTERSON SAID THAT THE GOJ WAS SEARCHING FOR ALTERNATE SOURCES, INCLUDING THE US IF THE PRICE WERE RIGHT. HE ENCOURAGED THE TRADE TO DO LIKEWISE, BUT OFFERED NO HOPE OF RESTORING THE SUPPLY TO ANYTHING APPROACHING NORMALCY IN THE NEAR TERM. LOCAL CONSUMPTION RUNS ABOUT 40,000 TONS ANNUALLY, OF WHICH 3,000 IS LOCALLY PRODUCED.

2. WITH JAMAICA FACING A FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND ECONOMIC CRISIS OF IMMENSE PROPORTIONS AS A RESULT OF THE ENERGY CRISIS, A PER-SISTENT SHORTAGE OF RICE WILL CONSIDERABLY EXACERBATE THE PROB-
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PAGE 02 KINGST 00184 161939Z

LEMS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND IMPOSE A SEVERE HARDSHIP ON THE JAMAICAN PEOPLE. IT COULD ALSO RESULT IN AN EXPANSION OF THE,

THUS FAR, PETTY RIOTING TO THE POINT OF SERIOUS CIVIL DISTURBANCES.

3. ACTION REQUESTED: THE EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT THE CONCERNED WASHINGTON AGENCIES PROVIDE IT ON AN URGENT BASIS WITH THE LATEST INFORMATION ON THE AVAILABILITY AND PRICE OF RICE FOR EXPORT.
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Message Attributes

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